

Testimony in favor of SB #1178: *An Act Expanding Connecticut Paid Sick Days*
Kim McLaughlin, Director, Naugatuck Valley Project

Dear Members of Labor and Public Employees Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Kim McLaughlin, Director of the Naugatuck Valley Project (NVP) in Waterbury, CT. I live in Bridgeport, CT. The Naugatuck Valley Project is a proud member of the Recovery For All Coalition. I speak today for our organization. The Naugatuck Valley Project supports Senate Bill No. 1178: *An Act Expanding Connecticut Paid Sick Days*. We believe that every worker in CT deserves 5 paid sick days.

We are an organization of 24 member organizations, including Comunidad de Trabajadores Domésticos Unidos, an organization of domestic workers living and working in the Naugatuck Valley. For several years, NVP leaders and organizers have been educating hundreds of domestic workers about their new rights passed by the General Assembly in 2021. NVP wishes to thank the Labor Committee for their work getting that bill out of committee and enacted as a new CT law two years ago.

A majority of Comunidad de Trabajadores Domésticos Unidos families are headed by single women. They are supporting children and in many cases, elderly members of their family. Weekly paychecks are critical for food and housing and not much else. There is little wiggle room in family budgets. Nearly every domestic worker who is a member of our organization contracted COVID-19 over the last three years, some more than once. Without sick days, domestic workers lost 2 weeks or nearly half a month of critical wages to keep their family fed and a roof over their heads. Without paid sick days, their families were driven to food banks and emergency shelters. Although NVP does not provide social services, we realized very early in the pandemic that our domestic worker families needed food. NVP, in partnership with our Dominicanos-US member organization provided robust weekly food baskets to over 75 families throughout the crisis.

I'm sure you would all agree that the work of providing weekly food baskets during the pandemic was important to our domestic worker families survival. For the same reason – survival – it is equally important that all workers have the right to paid sick days. Doctors tell us that the best way to lessen the severity of a virus or bacteria related illness is to catch it early, get the medical that we need, and rest. Without sick days, how can workers follow that advice? Without sick days, hundreds of thousands of CT's workers are working through illnesses, weakening their stamina, weakening their resistance to future illness, and potentially contaminating their work environment for others. It is time to legislate paid sick days for all workers in CT.

Thank you for your time today. The Naugatuck Valley Project urges the Labor Committee passage of paid sick days in 2023.